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03/15/2006 07:06 PM To
Group A-AND-R-DOCKET@EPA
cc

bcc

Subject
EPA Docket ID No. OAR-2001-0017

Dear EPA Administrator Johnson,

Re: EPA Docket ID No. OAR-2001-0017

As a Biology, Wildlife Management and Environmental Earth Science teacher working in the public school systems of several states, for over twenty years I have been teaching students the importance of a sustainable life style. I want them to learn to live within the ecological budget of Earth. The quality of life for the present and future generations depends on keeping the life sustaining diversity of our complex life systems healthy. Although there are some impressive self-maintaining dynamics at work to stabilize these systems, there are limits to their ability to correct for continued stress. The geological record is full of evidence showing sudden drastic upheavals and ecological disasters. We have no valid reason to believe that we humans with our huge powers to alter the climate and ecosystems will not trigger another watershed shift in the world's balance that will result in condition that renders the Earth unsuitable for human life, or that degrades the quality of our existence to a much lower

Particle pollution is made up of tiny particles, called "fine" particles, and slightly larger ones, called "coarse" particles, that are both dangerous and pervasive. Because of their size, these particles can bypass the body's natural defenses, such as coughing and sneezing, and lodge deep within the lungs or even pass into the bloodstream, causing serious respiratory and cardiovascular problems, such as asthma attacks, heart attacks, and lung cancer. In fact, particle pollution is so dangerous that it cuts short the lives of tens of thousands of Americans each year. Power plants and diesel engines are the largest source of particle pollution. In some parts of the country, agriculture and mining contribute to serious local coarse particle problems.

Under the Clean Air Act, the administration must set air quality standards at levels that protect public health, review these standards every five years, and update them as needed. For fine particle pollution, there are two standards: an "annual" standard based on how much fine particle pollution is safe to breathe on a regular, everyday basis and a "24-hour" standard based on how much fine particle pollution is safe to breathe on any one day.

In the last several years, study after study has confirmed the damaging health effects of particles, even at levels well below the current annual and 24-hour standards. In 2005, both the administration's independent science advisors on clean air issues and the EPA's staff scientists

concluded that adverse health effects occur at levels well below the current fine particle standards. As a result, they recommended that the administration strengthen the standards to protect public health. I find it very disturbing that you have considered rejecting the recommendations of these well qualified scientists for the benefit polluting industries.

The two sons my wife and I have produced are the most important things in my world. We have done everything to raise them to be strong and healthy. We have tried to equip them to enjoy their lives to the fullest extent while making a substantial contribution to the quality of life of others. They are sons to make us proud. Now it is my job to do my part to see that they, and their future children, and all their children's children have a quality existence as well. The love I feel for my sons demands that I do nothing less than give this effort my full persistent attention. I am asking you to consider, do you have people in your life that mean this much to you? Will you do your part to make sure that all our children will have a future full of interesting creatures, clean water and pure air? Please help me for the sake of all of our children.

Sincerely,

Robert A. Mertz
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